Course Description

“Public Opinion and Voting Behavior” is a subfield of political science, not simply a course, that covers almost every corner of our daily political life. Every aspect of a voter’s political life, including political discussion, reasoning, decision making, news media use, and so on, can be a proper subject for studying in this subfield. This course, therefore, is designed to inspire graduate students who like to develop ideas for their thesis regarding individuals’ political life, or those who are ready to advance their own projects on political psychology and/or political communication in general and political behavior and public opinion in particular. This course is designed for master-level graduate students who are interested in overviewing classics about voters and information processing and then exploring recent inspiring research works. This theory-oriented course will guide students to think from a broader perspective about the functionality of democracy, the relationship between individuals, the news media, and the political elites. The major topics addressed in this class include partisanship, indepdent voters, media use, communicaiton networks, vote choice, and voter turnout. The selected and carefully ordered topics for each week will lead students to construct a vision to better understand the dynamics of our daily political life.

Beyond the subjects listed in this syllabus, special attention will be paid to research design and methods that are recently presented in the cutting-edges scholarly journals. Given that th reading load of this course is cut half of a regular political science course, students are required to spare time on self-learning research methods, such as statistical modeling and field experiment, when the semester goes.

Course Texts and Readings

The course requires active participation in reading assigned materials. These materials will be available online. Check frequently the Class Mateiral folder. You are also responsible to utilize university’s journal articles system (such as SSCI) and the interlibrary loan system when parepare for the class discussion and term paper.


Grading Policy

- Semester Project (70%): Including Proposal (30%) and Term Paper (40%). Proposal must cite at least 10 scholarly works that are published within 5 years and explain how these papers contribute to your research proposal. The term paper must present prelimaritive findings. Your are responsible to present your paper in the end of the semester and your works are subject to be published online. You are encourage to prepare your works to be presented in a conference and your grade of the project will be given based on a general scholarly publication standard, including the following aspects:
• Class Participation (30%): Involvement in class discussion include your attendance, questions provided for discussion, and responses to questions. You are asked to read through the given materials before the class and bring thoughts to the class. You will be assigned to two weeks to play as a discussion leader. You are required to lead the class discussion for at least one hour, discussing and evaluating the assigned literature from the standards listed above.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1. [3/3] Introduction to the Class

Week 2. [3/10] Partisanship and Reasoning

• ATTENTION: All students are requested to attend an invited talk: “Digital media, mass media, and public opinion in the Umbrella Movement” by Prof. Francis Lee.

  - Time: March 10, 10:10am
  - Classroom: GE 1008
  - This is the make-up for the 3/31 course.

• Assigned:


• Supplemental:


3. [3/17] Political Participation in a Mobile Era

• Invited Talk: “Digital media and social movements: Self-mobilization and its limitations” (by Francis Lee)

• Assigned:

   • Assigned:
   • The teacher will present about his most recent talk on this subject.

5. [3/31] (Class to be Rescheduled to the morning of 3/10)
   • The teacher will attend the Western Political Science Association 2015 Annual Meeting (3/28-4/7).

6. [4/7] Spring Break Extended (Class Go Online)
   • TBA

   • Assigned:
   • Supplemental:

   • Assigned:
   • Supplemental:

   • Assigned:
   • Supplemental:
   - Assigned:
   - Supplemental: TBA

11. [5/12] News Media Use and Selective Processes (2)
   - Assigned:
   - Supplemental:
     - Sides, J. (2011, December 19). Did you watch or listen to the GOP debate? Are you sure?

12. [5/19] Partisan Polarization and Social Cleavage
    - Assigned:
    - Supplemental: TBA

13. [5/26] Voters’ Constraints in Democracy
    - Assigned:
    - Supplemental: TBA

14. [6/2] Political Behavior and Conformity Online and Offline
    - Assigned:
    - Supplemental: TBA
15. [6/9] Voter Turnout and Mobilization

- Assigned:

- Supplemental: TBA

16. [6/16] Student Oral Presentation (1) & Class Conclusion

17. [6/23] Student Oral Presentation (2) & Term paper Deadline